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ABSTRACT

Considering the mother-child relationship as the first in which culturally-related interdependence or independence is learned, this study examined whether the interdependency hypothesis holds for the mother-child relationship in Indonesia. The study focused on the quality of the mother-child relationship, children's daily social interactions, and contextual characteristics of the children's immediate environment to determine if Indonesian children learn to act and respond in an interdependent way toward others. Participating were 80 Sudanese-Indonesian mother-child dyads from low and lower-middle socio-economic status families. The average age of the children was about 38 months. For purposes of cross-cultural comparison, Indonesian data were available for 76 mother-child dyads, 41 infants and toddlers and 35 three to six year olds. Slightly more than half of the dyads lived in nuclear families, while the others lived in extended families. Data were collected through participant observation, ethnographic interviews, videotaped structured play sessions, and the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment. Cross-cultural comparison of findings showed that the quality of maternal support was comparable to Dutch and Surinam-Dutch mothers' support but not comparable to the support provided by Japanese mothers. Indonesian mothers behaved more respectfully than emotionally supportive toward their children's autonomy, particularly for 3 to 6 year-olds. The 3 to 6 year-olds had more opportunities for independent experiences than younger children. Daily social routines were not related to the quality of mothers' interactive behavior. Mothers with higher educational levels spent more time with their children than did mothers with less education. (Contains 17 references.) (KB)

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Indonesian mothers and their young children: Towards an interdependent society?

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Social relationships in Asian countries have often been typified as interdependent or collectivistic in contrast to Western cultures that are said to be independent or individualistic (e.g., Doi, 1989; Hofstede, 1980). The mother-child relationship is considered to be the first arena in which interdependency or independence is learned. This paper examines whether the interdependency hypothesis holds for the mother-child relationship in Indonesia. In Indonesia, mothers appear to provide a lot of close, physical care by holding their infants in a carrying cloth ('slendang') for much of their waking hours. Furthermore, co-sleeping with young children occurs in most families and the social density of persons surrounding the child is generally very high. Does this mean that Indonesian children automatically learn to act and respond in an interdependent way towards others? In other words, rely heavily on others for support and guidance instead of relying on their own will and judgement? To address this issue, the current paper consecutively focused on the quality of the mother-child relationship, children's daily social interactions, and contextual characteristics of the children's immediate environment. First, cross-cultural differences between aspects of the mother's interactive behavior were examined. Second, length of time the children interacted with various persons was examined. Third, the relation between the quality of the mother-child relationship, the children's daily social interactions, and contextual characteristics was explored in order to examine intra-cultural differences in interdependency versus independency experiences.

The distinction between collectivism and individualism is made at the cultural level in order to be able to distinguish between cultures. However, the investigation of this dimension generally takes place at the individual level. Research has shown that the distinction between collectivism and individualism appears to be multidimensional and not bipolar (e.g, Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai & Lucca, 1988; Rhee, Uleman & Lee, 1996). Furthermore, the same individual can be called collectivistic or other-oriented in relation to one group, for instance the family, and individualistic or self-oriented towards another group (e.g. Oyserman, 1993). But differences within a culture can also exist in relation to the same group. The present research focuses on indices of interdependent versus independent behavior of young children at the micro-

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level; that is with family and friends. Most of the research in the collectivism-individualism field has investigated values and attitudes, but few have tried to measure actual behavior. In the present paper, daily social routines of the whereabouts of the child and its social network are investigated as well as the quality of mother-child behavior. From the daily social routines, we might learn something about the possibilities of the child to engender interdependent versus independent experiences. Aspects of the quality of parental interactive behaviour can play an important role in the child's feeling of interdependence versus independence. For instance, mothers with relatively low scores on emotional support and relatively high scores on respect for the child's autonomy can be expected to contribute to the child's feeling of independence. The opposite can be expected for interdependency feelings. The question is whether Indonesian mothers score higher on, for instance, emotional support than mothers from other cultures. Information about the quality of the mother-child relationship is also relevant for examining within-cultural differences. Some children might feel secure enough to explore their environment more or less independently whereas others feel insecure and will not do so. A relation between the quality of the mother-child dyad and the child' daily social routines can be expected.

Daily routines of the child can tell us something about, for instance, the social network of the child and the time the child spends in interaction, near others, or alone. The ratio of activities with others versus activities alone might indicate interdependency versus independence fostering experiences. In a society where children are rarely playing alone (Adimihardja & Utja, 1991), we assume that children have less opportunity to develop independence feelings. Finally, contextual and ecological variables such as sleeping patterns, social density, and safety of the environment can be examined to provide insight into intra-cultural variation. Contextual circumstances are supposed to be related to the children's daily routines and the quality of the mothers' interactive behaviour. More opportunities for the fostering of feelings of interdependency might be expected in children living in dense social circumstances, with no opportunity to play alone, and with mothers who are more emotionally supportive than respectful of their autonomy compared to children in opposite circumstances. In short, I examine whether evidence can be found in the immediate environment of Indonesian children's that supports the interdependency assumption.

Method

Participants

The total sample consisted of 80 Sundanese-Indonesian mother-child dyads. To include contextual variation, families from two different socio-economic status groups were selected at random. There were 48 dyads from low SES families and 32 from lower-middle SES families. Socio-Economic

Status (SES) was defined by family income, parental occupational status, and educational level of both parents. In low SES families, parents were employed as unskilled or semi-skilled laborers and had primary school as the maximum level of education. In lower-middle SES families, parents had skilled labor or white-collar jobs and high school as the maximum level of education. The average age of the children was 38.74 months (SD=19.90; range 12-78). For the cross-cultural comparison, Indonesian data were available for 76 mother-child dyads who were divided into two age-groups dependent upon the age of the child: 41 infants and toddlers (12-36 months: 19 girls, 22 boys) and 35 preschoolers (37-72 months; 17 girls, 18 boys). Slightly more than half (57%) of the mother-child dyads lived in a nuclear family, the others lived in an extended family household.

Procedure

The mothers and children were visited at home by the first author with an average of three formal visits per family (range 2-5) lasting 1.1 hours per visit on average. The home visits yielded 3.2 hours of observations per child (range 2-7). By means of participant observation and ethnographic interviews, data were collected on routine mother-child interactions and the mother's child-rearing values and aspirations. The observations were written in the form of a narrative report. In addition, three trained local research assistants visited the families an average of three times for three hours to gather specimen descriptions of the caregiver-child interactions across the entire day. One of the local research assistants and the first author administered the IT-HOME for infants and toddlers or the EC-HOME for preschoolers (Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment, Caldwell & Bradley, 1978). After the data collection in the participants' homes, the mothers and children were invited to a local facility within easy walking distance of their homes, where mother-child interaction was videotaped during a structured play session.

The structured play session lasted an average of 15 minutes with four to six episodes (depending on the child's age), each lasting two or three minutes. During each episode, the mother was asked to let her child perform a particular task. She was told that she could help her child whenever she felt she needed to. The tasks consisted of activities such as ball play, reading a book, or putting a puzzle together. For infants and toddlers, the last episode was a free play situation.

Instruments and Measures

Quality of mother-child behavior. In the videotaped structured play session, the quality of support the mothers provided to their children was assessed using five seven-point rating scales developed by Erickson, Sroufe, and Egeland (1985): for supportive presence (i.e., expression of positive regard and emotional support for the child), respect for autonomy (i.e., recognition of and respect for the child's individuality, motives, and perspectives), structure and limit setting (i.e.,

adequacy of mother's attempts to communicate her expectations with regard to the child's behavior and enforce her agenda adequately), quality of instruction (i.e., the degree to which instructions are timed to the child's focus, stated clearly, paced at a rate that allows comprehension, and graded in logical steps understandable to the child), and hostility (i.e., expression of anger, discounting or rejection of the child). These scales were chosen because they are specifically designed for rating the quality of maternal support during tasks in which she is asked to help or instruct her child and have been successfully used by children from 12 to 42 months of age from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Erickson et al., 1985; Juffer, 1993; Meij, 1992; Riksen-Walraven et al., 1996; Vereijken et al., 1997). The five rating scales were applied independently by both authors and a trained graduate student. Inter-rater reliability, computed for 16 dyads, was .90 for supportive presence, .86 for respect for autonomy, .79 for structure and limit setting, .89 for quality of instruction, and .79 for hostility (Pearson correlations). All five scales were significantly intercorrelated, with correlations ranging from $r = .23$ to $r = .67$ ($p < .05$). Cronbach's alpha for the five rating scales was .76. In addition to the separate scale scores, we also computed a composite score for the quality of maternal support in the structured play session by summing the five scale scores after reversing the score for hostility.

The quality of the child's behavior was assessed in the structured play setting using other scales of Erickson e.s. (1985): negativity, avoidance, compliance, and affectivity. These scales were applied independently by a trained graduate student. Inter-rater reliability, computed for 10 dyads, was .86 for negativity, .69 for avoidance, .88 for compliance, and .90 for affectivity (Pearson correlations).

The child's daily social routines. From the specimen descriptions, scores on the child's daily social routines were gathered by research assistants from 6 AM to 9 PM. The assistants recorded ongoing activities of the child, with whom the child was performing these activities, who was in the near vicinity of the child during these activities, in which place the child was, and what the child was eating or drinking. These observations were coded for a subsample of the children (N=62) over a period of 6 AM to 8 PM because most of the children slept already after 8 PM. From these coded observations several scores were obtained. Scores available for this paper were: the time the child spent in interaction, near others, or alone, and with whom the child interacted. The observations also recorded sleeping behavior during the day.

Contextual variables. To assess characteristics of the caregiving context which might affect the quality of interactive behavior 37 measures were derived from a household survey, health records, ethnographic interviews, and two subscales of the IT- and EC-HOME (Caldwell & Bradley, 1978). Each of the measures fitted in one of the five domains (family structure, education,

wealth, health, residential mobility) described elsewhere (Zevalkink, 1997; Zevalkink & Riksen-Walraven, 1999).

Results

Aspects of the quality of mother-child behavior

A cross-cultural comparison revealed that the quality of Indonesian mothers' interactive behaviour was more similar to the quality of support provided by lower class Dutch and Surinam-Dutch mothers than to that of Japanese mothers (Zevalkink & Riksen-Walraven, accepted). Furthermore, these data showed that Indonesian mothers had comparatively similar scores on emotional support and respect for autonomy when observed with 1-to-3 year old children, but significantly different scores when observed with 3-to-6 year olds. Mothers behaved more respectfully than emotionally supportive towards their preschoolers.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Child's Daily Social Routines, 6 AM to 8 PM, Minutes per Hour

Child	Duration	
	M (SD)	Range
Asleep	15.3 (10.3)	0-38
Not interacting with others	15.5 (10.2)	0-36
Interacting with others		
Family		
Mother	16.5 (9.0)	2-40
Father	0.8 (1.3)	0-6
Sibling(s)	3.3 (4.0)	0-17
Extended family		
Grandmother	0.5 (1.3)	0-6
Aunt	1.0 (2.8)	0-16
Cousin(s)	1.5 (3.6)	0-19
Non-relatives		
Neighbour(s)	0.4 (1.3)	0-8
Friends	7.1 (12.1)	0-69*

* The range can exceed the 60 minutes, in cases where more children play with the child at the same time. N = 62.

Children's daily social routines

Table 1 shows the average number of minutes per hour that a child is asleep, not interacting with others, and interacting with others. Across the 0-to-6 year age range, children slept an average of 15 minutes per hour during the day. They were mostly engaged with their mothers, but also played with other children. On average, they played more with friends than siblings or cousins. The results also show that the children did not interact much with other adults besides the mother. During daytime hours, the children were found to be near others an average of 43 minutes (SD = 9.4); to be in interaction with others for another 15 minutes (SD = 10.2) while no other person was near; and to be all by themselves without others being near or interacting with others for 2 minutes (SD = 2.8). Interacting with mother was negatively related to interacting with siblings and friends. This means that children who played more with siblings and friends were interacting less with their mother. When children were longer awake during the day they interacted less with their mothers and more with their cousins and friends. Across the two age groups, children differed significantly in the length of time they played alone, with their parents, siblings, grandmother, and friends (see Table 2). Three-to-six year olds played more by themselves, less with their mothers, fathers, and grandmothers, and more with their friends compared to 0-to-3 year old Indonesian children.

Contextual and ecological circumstances, maternal support and daily routines

Contextual variables were related to the quality of the mother's support towards her child in a structured play setting. Regression analysis showed that mothers provided higher quality of support in this setting when they had children who presently or previously attended preschool than mothers from families with no preschool attendance (Zevalkink & Riksen-Walraven, accepted). Aspects of mother's supportive behavior that were significantly (two-tailed) related to preschool attendance were supportive presence (r = .30**), structure and limit setting (r = .28*), and quality of instruction (r = .49**).

Relations between aspects of the quality of maternal support and daily social routine scores revealed that mothers were less emotionally supportive (r = -.31*), more hostile (r = .44**), and provided less structure and limits (r = .30*) when extended family members were more actively involved with the child. Investigations of separate correlations of grandmothers, aunts, nieces and nephews revealed that this negative relation was primarily caused by the correlation between support and interactions with nieces. Children who played more often with their niece(s) had mothers who were more hostile (r = .60**), provided less structure and limits (r = -.41**), and gave lower quality instructions (r = -.27*) than children who played less with their nieces. Correlations of support and interaction with family members revealed no relation between support and amount

Table 2
Differences between 0-to-3 and 3-to-6 year old Indonesian Children in Daily Social Routines

	Duration (min/hr)		
Child	0-to-3 N = 36 M (SD)	3-to-6 N = 24 M (SD)	t value
Asleep	19.2 (10.1)	10.4 (9.1)	
Not interacting with others	10.0 (9.0)	23.3 (5.8)	-6.4**
Interacting with others			
Family			
Mother	22.2 (6.7)	8.2 (4.8)	9.4**
Father	1.1 (1.6)	0.3 (0.5)	2.3*
Sibling(s)	2.1 (3.0)	5.1 (4.8)	-3.0*
Extended family			
Grandmother	0.8 (1.5)	0.2 (0.8)	2.0*
Aunt	1.5 (3.5)	0.4 (1.5)	n.s.
Cousin(s)			n.s.
Non-relatives			
Neighbour(s)	0.6 (1.6)	0.2 (0.7)	n.s.
Friends	2.1 (4.0)	12.2 (11.5)	-4.9**

$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

of time with mother, father or sister(s), but a positive correlation of quality of instruction with time spent with brother(s) ($r = .37$**). This means that a child who spends more time with its brother receives higher quality of instructions from its mother than a child who spends less time playing with its brother. When controlling for age, the same results were found except for the negative relation between structure and limit setting and time spent with extended family members that became non-significant.

Quality aspects of child behavior in the structured play setting were related to daily social routine scores. These aspects of child behavior aspects might be strongly influenced by age. Therefore, differences between the two age groups were first examined. Results showed that 0-to-3 year old children were more negative and avoidant and less compliant compared to 3-to-6 year olds. Then, the relation with daily social routine scores was examined. After accounting for the

effects of age by means of partial correlations, results showed that children who spent more time on their own were more compliant in the structured play setting ($r = .30^*$).

The relation between contextual characteristics and the child's daily social routine was examined after accounting for age effects. Preliminary results showed that time spent with mother was positively related with mothers' education level ($r = .49^{**}$). Furthermore, interacting with mother was positively related with the availability of toys ($r = .42^{**}$) and negatively related with the quality of the physical living environment ($r = -.33^*$). Interacting with siblings was positively related to quality of the physical living environment ($r = .27^*$). Children who played a lot with friends had mothers with lower educational levels, whereas children who were more often playing on their own had less toys available ($r = -.27^*$) and their parents spent less money on schooling ($r = -.34^*$). No significant relation was found between the child's daily routines and social density of the household. With regard to sleeping arrangements, results showed a relation between time spent with mother and sleeping arrangements ($r = .36^*$). Children who spent more time interacting with their mothers were more likely to sleep alone in bed than with their parents. In general, it was found that 89% of the Indonesian children slept with their mothers although 66% of the mothers preferred their children to sleep elsewhere.

Conclusions and Discussion

In short, what indications of interdependency versus independency were found in the data? First, results showed that the quality of support by Indonesian mothers was not comparable to the support provided by mothers from another Asian sample, namely the Japanese mothers. The Japanese mothers had a different socio-economic background compared to the three other samples. However, the difference between supportive presence and respect for autonomy was larger for Indonesian mothers compared to the mothers from other ethnic samples. This difference became even bigger when the children were 3-to-6 year old (Zevalkink & Riksen-Walraven, accepted). This means that in general Indonesian mothers behaved more respectfully towards their children's autonomy than emotionally supportive. This indicates that Indonesian mothers appear to value independence somewhat higher than interdependence. This finding is in line with recent findings in Japan regarding the value of interdependent behavior ('amae') versus secure behavior (Vereijken, Riksen-Walraven, & Van Lieshout, 1997).

Secondly, Indonesian children aged three to six year seem to get more opportunity for independence experiences than 0-to-3 year old children. On average, they were more on their own than the younger children. Whether this fosters independency feelings is, however, another matter. If the period of not interacting with others mostly included, for instance, listlessly watching other children play, then it is unlikely that children of this age behaved more independent than the

younger children did. Data about the activities of the children still have to be analyzed before this matter can be solved. However, the present results show that children who spent more time on their own were more compliant in a play setting. Compliant behavior towards the mother might suggest that the child has a secure relationship with the mother. In this light, it might indeed be a sign of independence when children spent more time on their own. Furthermore, time spent not interacting with others does not mean that others are not near. Indonesian children are rarely alone in the sense that others are not near or not interacting with them (5% of the time), even when they are 3-to-6 year old (8%).

Thirdly, daily social routines were not related to the quality of mothers' interactive behavior. Therefore, it appears that the length of the interaction with family members is not important for its quality. However, if children interacted longer with extended family members, especially nieces, they would receive lower quality of support from their mothers.

Fourthly, contextual characteristics did relate to the children's daily routines. Some preliminary findings show that higher educated mothers spend more time with their children. Length of time spent with mother was also related to the availability of toys. When time spent with mother includes toys, the assumption might be made that this is a sign of giving the child the opportunity to explore a stimulating non-social environment and develop some feelings of independent competence rather than focus primarily on the social environment. Children with higher educated mothers probably get more independency opportunities than children with lower educated mothers. This finding is in line with Japanese findings by Kashiwagi (1996) who found that parents with higher levels of education were significantly more 'westernized' in life-style and thinking about parenting than parents with a lower level of education who held more closely to traditional Japanese values. Besides intra-cultural differences in parental values, there might be a discrepancy between actual circumstances and values about togetherness. A tentative conclusion is that 'on the surface' interdependency may appear to develop in Indonesian children due to contextual and ecological circumstances but that the present study found evidence that Indonesian children also get ample opportunity to develop feelings of independence besides interdependency feelings. Interdependency may, therefore, be less of a characteristic of the psychological make-up of Indonesian children than superficially expected.

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